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THE CROFTER QUESTION  
AND  
CHURCH ENDOWMENTS  
IN THE HIGHLANDS,  
VIEWED SOCIALLY AND POLITICALLY.  
WITH AN APPENDIX.

BY  
GILBERT BEITH,  
BALLOCHNECK, STIRLINGSHIRE.

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"Thus saith the Lord, keep Equity and do Justice."

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# THE CROFTER QUESTION

## AND

# CHURCH ENDOWMENTS.

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SOME time ago it was my lot to spend a Sunday, in the month of August, on the west coast of Sutherland. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the surrounding landscape. All nature was bathed in sunshine. Gurgling moss-coloured water from the hills, humming insect life, and varied bleatings from the surrounding uplands, chanted a song of praise. All besides was still as the Sahara desert. Even within the precincts of the hotel, quiet reigned. It was the "Sabbath day," and no work uncalled for by the stern mandate of "necessity and mercy," was engaged in. I learned from "mine host" that the Free Church was half a mile, and the Parish Church about a mile distant, towards the west, and that service in both began at twelve o'clock, the language used in the former being Gaelic, and in the latter English.

Soon after eleven o'clock men, women, and children might be seen, singly and in groups, approaching slowly over the crests, and from behind the huge grey boulders of the surrounding hills, as if they had risen out of the ground, and all converged towards one general rendezvous. There I concluded, would be found the Free Church, and accordingly joining leisurely in the procession, I found myself in a short time in view of the building. It was situated in a secluded spot all but unseen from the highway; a plain but capacious edifice in the style of many of the earlier Disruption churches, with three low spanned roofs supported internally by a double row of iron pillars, and resting upon four plain rubble walls from fifteen to twenty feet high. This church, which accommodated about twelve hundred worshippers, was by twelve o'clock filled to overflowing. The minister, a man in middle life, and seemingly much impressed with the responsibility of his office, was

manifestly held in much esteem by the people who crowded to hear his preaching. As I hastened away to join in the English service of the Parish Church, there burst from the open doors and windows that remarkable cadence of praise, so plaintive and beautiful, which is only to be heard in the Scottish Highlands. A turn in the road brought me suddenly in view of one of those magnificent lochs or fiords, everywhere indenting the western coast of Sutherland. Along the shores, and at some points stretching half a mile inland, were to be seen many small thatch-covered huts surrounded by little patches of land, green with growing potatoes and oats; and, drawn up high on the beach, here and there lay a tiny fishing-boat. Close on my right, near to the highway, stood the Parish Church, a substantial building with a belfry and bell; and about five hundred yards nearer to the sea, situated in the centre of what seemed to be a goodly sized and well stocked farm, was the Manse, a large and comfortable mansion, looking out upon one of the fairest and most enchanting prospects under heaven. The church was closed, and fearing that service had begun, I hastened and tried to open the door, but found it locked. I looked through one of the windows, but all was empty and silent within. In about a quarter of an hour a figure issued from the manse, looked at me for a little, and then retired. Half an hour later a respectably dressed woman came along the road from the shore, accompanied by a little girl, her daughter, and proceeded to open the door of the church. I approached and asked if there would be service to-day. She replied, "O yes, sir." "What hour," I rejoined. "Twelve o'clock, sir." "But it is now not far from one o'clock," I replied. "O, there will be service, sir," was her quiet answer. I went into the church, and found, to my surprise, the pews, with the exception of one or two on either side of the pulpit, and two immediately in front, covered with what seemed to be white dust, and sitting down in one of the clean or used seats, I awaited the course of events. After some time had



elapsed the little girl came running to her mother, who stood at the door, and said in an earnest whisper, "They are coming." The bell began to toll, the sound of horses' hoofs and wheels approaching was heard, and a large carriage soon stopped close to the church. In a few minutes a tall, dignified, and handsomely dressed lady, with two well-grown daughters and one or two children, entered, accompanied by her husband, a vigorous looking country gentleman, evidently of local importance. They occupied the seat in front of the pulpit, whilst the adjoining pew was taken possession of by one or two persons, apparently their domestic servants. Soon a lady, evidently the minister's wife, entered with a son and daughter and two domestics. These occupied the pew on the left of the pulpit. Then followed, at intervals, two men respectably attired, and accompanied by one or two persons. And last of all came the minister, a venerable looking old gentleman, carrying a large Bible under his arm, and ascending the stair, entered the pulpit. There was no beadle and no precentor. The service began by the minister reading, in full, one of the Psalms of David, from the metrical version. Thereafter he engaged in prayer, read at some length from the Scriptures, again read a metrical Psalm, and then announced his text. The sermon, which was read with much deliberation, occupied twenty minutes. It was elegantly composed and thoroughly evangelical in doctrine. Another prayer, beautifully expressed, and the reading of a suitable Psalm concluded the service, which occupied, in all, rather less than three-quarters of an hour. The impression produced on my mind was that of real sympathy and pity for both minister and congregation; they looked so like strangers in a strange land.

Next morning, proceeding on my way south, I had to cross an arm of the sea about three miles distant. The ferryman was a burly intelligent looking man, and desiring to be sociable, I said, "The people here do not seem to go much to the Parish Church." An emphatic "No" was the

laconic reply. Continuing, I said, "I was there yesterday." "You were there yesterday," he said, looking hard at me, "and was there any person there besides?" "O yes," I replied. "Oh, aye, the day was fine," he continued, "and the factor would be there with his lady and some others, they come when it's fine; and the Doctor would be there, and the Exciseman would be there no doubt, and the minister's family of course, but that would be all." I said, "We had no singing." "Did Duncan no sing?" was the reply. "Who is Duncan?" I said. "The minister's son; he would not sing because you was there." I continued, "We had an excellent sermon all the same." "He would read it," said my oarsman. I nodded assent. "Aye, aye, one of the old stock, and likely the best of them too," muttered the burly cynic. Continuing, he said, "I am an A——man, and they are stiff enough there, but nothing like the people here. All over this country, far and near, they would just rather go up and be hanged than go into the Parish Church, so they would." "Very strange," I said, as stepping ashore I bade farewell to my brusque companion.

I narrate in detail this incident as affording a fair example of the uncompromising attitude assumed by the people of the northern and western counties towards the State Church and all connected with it. Deep-seated aversion, and an almost passionate determination to ignore the very existence of the Established Church, is the all but universal sentiment. Now, the question comes to be, why should this be so? What causes lie at the root of a protest so emphatic as this? Everyone has, of course, heard of the great hold which those principles, the contravention of which led to the Disruption of the Church of Scotland, have always had on the minds and consciences of the Highland people. These principles are traditional among them, and are associated and intertwined with their most hallowed memories. When, therefore, the government in 1843 determined, in spite of vehement remonstrances, to assert the will of the State over what the people believed to

be the mind and will of Christ in His church, a gross outrage was perpetrated upon their most sacred convictions.

I will not pause to inquire into the merits of the question, which, on that supreme occasion, agitated to its centre the entire Scottish nation. The crisis which followed has had issues of world-wide importance—issues which are still active and must yet have great results. Suffice it to say that the ablest and most practical minds which Scotland has ever produced recognized, as involved in that struggle, principles of vital importance affecting the honour of the Master and the religious liberties of the people, to preserve which no sacrifice of earthly possessions and prospects was considered too great. The people of the Highlands were profoundly impressed with this view, and resolved as one man to sever connection with a church which they held to be no longer the true Church of Scotland. This resolution was formed unhesitatingly, and for forty years has been held to with characteristic determination.

But some other cause beyond, of a more mundane character, must be found to account satisfactorily for the intensity of feeling which I have described. That cause is not far to seek. One has only to revert to the history of the Disruption period, to the deeds that were then done, and above all to the men who did them, to discover the secret. Who among us in middle life does not remember the persecutions to which the Highlanders were subjected in the "site-refusing"\* time?—how noble dukes and great landlords with their factors, refused, for months and even years, to allow the people to assemble for the worship of God, according to their consciences, in any house or on any land within their wide domains—how Christian men and women were compelled, summer and winter, to meet for worship on the public highway, or else within highwater mark on the sea-shore. I have been shown a cavern on the wild north-western coast, into which, for two

\* See Appendix A, also Report, House of Commons Select Committee on Sites for Churches, Scotland, 1847.

years (1843-44), the people of the district were driven by the high-handed proceedings of the landlord or his factor, to worship the God of their fathers,—an occurrence by no means uncommon in those days of oppression and violence.

But when one comes to consider that the men who pushed on the crisis of 1843, and who thereafter sought to cover their discomfiture by such acts, were the traditional oppressors of the people, the immediate descendants of those who in a previous generation burnt the homes of their fathers, evicted them from their lands, and drove them into destitution and exile; and, moreover, when one considers that these men, with their estate officials and dependants, are now virtually the only adherents of the State Church in the Highlands; and also that the ministers who now enjoy the emoluments and occupy the manses and glebes of the country are the natural successors of those who, with few exceptions, in the day of bitter distress sided with the oppressors, and for their sympathy and aid received new manses and extended lands, taken in many cases from the home steadings and farms of the evicted peasantry; when all of these causes put together, are duly considered, can it be wondered that the people of the Highlands regard with feelings of almost passionate aversion a Church from which they have been so alienated, which represents to their minds, not the bearer of glad tidings of peace, but the remembrance rather of ruined homesteads and scattered families?\*

The Established Church question in the Highlands is a crofters' question, bound up with the crofter land question. You cannot deal practically with the one injustice and leave the other untouched. The two questions together, represent a struggle for civil and religious liberty in which the people have been worsted and overthrown. If, in respect of religious privileges, the Highlanders are not now as destitute and helpless as they are in respect of their civil rights as occupiers of the soil, the cause is manifest and does not affect the question at issue. In the former case

\* See Appendix B.

they had for comrades in the fight their fellow-countrymen in the south, and have participated equally with them in the outflow of Christian benevolence, which it is the great glory of that conflict to have elicited. But the injustice, viewed socially and politically, everywhere remains, and in the Highlands it is immensely intensified from its connection with the land question, and the aggravating circumstances relative thereto. The claim for all Scotland is that the church endowments, with the buildings and lands, are the property of the people, and ought not to be in possession of one sect or section of the nation. But, taking the Highlands by themselves, the claim becomes immensely more urgent. There the church funds are disbursed for the sole benefit of the landlords and their minions, whereas the people, already bereft of their civil rights as occupiers of the soil, are also shut out from participating in any benefit derivable from this public property.

I refrain from dilating upon the history of the last fifty years in relation to this question, or upon the point and force which that history contributes to the national claim for justice in this matter. Neither will I dwell upon the fact that the one church at present in possession of this public property is in close alliance all over the country with the landed interest and privileged classes, and forms the leading outwork for defence of that political party of which these, with some noble exceptions, are the soul and centre. And I only mention in passing what has often been stated and requires no proof, that a judicious redistribution of those public funds can be effected without inflicting injury on any individual interest, and that the issue must only be eminently beneficial to the Church herself, and to the moral and religious well-being of the nation at large.

What I desire to emphasize as forming the basis of this statement is, that the church property, including teinds (valued and unvalued), glebes, churches, and manses, in each parish (when these are not recent and special gifts by individuals to the State Church as at present constituted),

are the public property of that parish or district. The teinds are held subject to being given up in whole or in part whenever a court of law decides that they are required for the parish that yields them. The clergy have no beneficiary right to the teinds, but only the stipendiary privilege of being salaried out of them to the extent to which commissioners who are now represented by the Court of Teinds, may determine; and Parliament has absolute power over the property thus applied in liferent of State Church ministers. John Knox contended stoutly that the "teinds by God's law do not appertain of necessity to the Kirkmen." The Court of Session and the House of Lords have both decided that the teinds never were restored to the Reformed Church of Scotland. The property, therefore, of which the State Church now derives the entire benefit is not ecclesiastical, but the public possession of the nation.

Such is the general state of the case; but I confine the question, for my present purpose, to the Highlands in particular, and claim that those funds which are the public property of the respective parishes be disposed of for the benefit of the people residing in those parishes. It will not be disputed that a scandalous injustice is involved in the application of these funds during the past forty years, and that the redistribution of them in the interest of the crofter population is urgently required, in view alike of their destitute condition, and of the relation in which they stand to the State Church.

Now, in proceeding to deal practically with this matter, I shall inquire—First, What do the endowment funds in the Highland parishes amount to? Second, How and when can they be made available for the end contemplated? Third, To what specific purposes ought they to be applied?

First, Taking the counties interested to be Orkney and Shetland, Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, Inverness, and Argyle,\* I find that the income from all sources at present enjoyed by the parish church ministers in these counties,

\* Other districts might be included, such as, the Island of Arran in the county of Bute, and portions of the county of Perth.

exclusive of payments from the exchequer, and the stipends of ministers of government churches, amounts to nearly £40,000 a year—say £40,000 a year. To this yearly sum has to be added the free and unexhausted teinds applicable to the augmentation of stipends, amounting to £6000, making in all a possible yearly income from teinds, &c., of £46,000.\* Besides, there falls to be added an asset which I shall not venture to value, but which nevertheless assuredly forms an element not to be overlooked in this account and reckoning. I refer to compensation of some kind for the forty years' misapplication of the public annual income of £40,000. Without adding interest, the gross sum so misapplied amounts to no less than £1,600,000. Adding interest and compound interest, at four per cent., it runs up to the large figure of £3,801,020. If compensation in any form is refused in this respect, parties will have to show that good and needful work for the respective parishes has been done commensurate with so large an outlay of public money. If this cannot be proved, or if on the contrary it can be shown that public money to so large an amount has been wasted, or as good as wasted, is the matter to be passed over without any redress, particularly when the public in this case is represented by a sorely-oppressed and impoverished people, who for two or three generations have striven to maintain a bare existence under circumstances which are a disgrace to our civilization?

On the other side of the account has to be placed compensation, in one form or another, for the life-interest of the present incumbents. Even to hint that this should not be allowed in their case would be looked upon, by most people, as savouring of confiscation, and I do not find fault with this opinion. Justice must be done although the heavens should fall. But let me ask, What of the people who have been ruthlessly driven from their homes and lands into destitution and misery? There was no word of

\* Parliamentary Return (Ministers' Stipends, &c., Scotland) to an Address of the House of Lords, dated 29th July, 1881.

compensation to them then, nor since. Is it to be always so? Is justice to be done in the one case and not in the other? Is there to be one law for the rich and another for the poor? And as regards this Church Endowment Fund, are the people to be for ever denuded of any benefit accruing from it; and is no redress to be allowed by the Nation, which is reponsible, for the loss already incurred of £3,800,000, through the misapplication and waste of this public money?

Second, It is a question for statesmen and for Parliament to determine how and on what equitable principles the people are to be reinstalled and compensated in this matter. The time *when* this business is actually to be taken up and dealt with practically is of more pressing importance, and the decision, let me say, in this respect, lies chiefly with the people themselves. Nearly everything depends upon a combined and earnest expression of the popular will in this matter. When the people are thoroughly roused and in earnest, Parliament must and will act. The time is not far distant, let us hope, when every householder, whatever may be his social position, will possess the right of the franchise, and be able in this practical form to assert his opinion. The question now under consideration is a people's question, and the people of the Highlands must see to it that they send to Parliament representatives who will express their views fearlessly and well. They should, if possible, be men of ability and influence who have sprung from their own ranks, and who therefore understand and have sympathy with their grievances, and can properly and persistently represent these in Parliament. Let me say further, that the Highland people should solicit and look for the friendly aid and support of the working-classes all over the country. It is in that direction that substantial aid and sympathy is to be obtained; for the "arm-chair" philanthropists and philosophers of the wealthier classes represent generally an element of most diluted potency, and, I fear, can only become an ingredient reliable and helpful, when the leading Scotch metropolitan Newspaper, and the set whom



it represents, have discovered, beyond any question, that the people are in earnest and mean to look after themselves.

The struggle may be long—it will certainly be severe, for on the opposing side are ranged “principalities and powers.” Victory, however, must in the end declare for the people, for on their side is “the right.”

Third, With regard to the purpose or purposes to which, in the interests of the respective parishes, these church funds should be applied, that too is a question to be handled by statesmen and by Parliament. I may, however, be permitted to name three distinct purposes, each of which, under wise legislative enactment, would prove of great advantage to the Highland people, and together would go far to elevate their social and material condition.

First, FREE EDUCATION, administered, I am disposed to say, under a direction other than the Local School Board. In the Highlands, because of the physical character of the country, the scattered and helpless condition of the people, and the absence of any independent middle class to come between the crofter population and the hostile landlord interest, the School Board system has not worked well and does not yield satisfactory results. It is, moreover, very expensive, keeping in view the slender resources of the crofter ratepayers. The annual report by the Accountant for Scotland to the Scottish Education Department for 1883 gives for the counties named: Fees collected for the year, £12,282; and rates for the same period, £53,803—together representing a very heavy tax upon the slender resources of the people.\* As an example of the unsatisfactory nature of some results under the present School Board system, as applied to these districts, I may state that it is no uncommon case in a purely Gaelic-speaking district to find a teacher, who does not know a word of Gaelic, set over a school in which the children attending do not know a word of English. The latter, which is the only language taught, is acquired by rote; and the children, aided by their

\* See Appendix C.

natural quickness and good memories, pass the government inspection without possessing any practical knowledge of what they have been examined upon. For many reasons which need not be mentioned I believe it would be in the interest of the Highlands that the education of the people, until all are possessed of the franchise, should be directed by commissioners named by the department, men who know the Highlands, and have sympathy with the people. It is of the first importance to the Highland people that they should everywhere be provided with FREE SCHOOLS supplying good practical education—primary and also secondary if desired; and likewise schools for technical instruction, situated in one or two of the more important centres. The funds required, so far as the proportion of rates and school fees derivable from the crofter and cottar population are concerned, may well be taken from the Church Endowment Fund; but everything beyond should remain, as at present, a burden upon land. In any case a just re-disposal of this public fund, now so urgently called for, might readily and well bestow upon the oppressed and helpless people of the Highlands the inestimable boon of a first-class education in all the branches, *free of charge*.

Second, LAND LEGISLATION, having for its object the application to the Highlands of the Irish Land Act, in all its leading features, with this addition, that land-owners be compelled, under just provisions, to supply suitable land when required, at a fair rent, in quantity sufficient to enable a family, by honest industry, to acquire a comfortable livelihood. It is not needful that I should state the case in language more definite. The land question in the Highlands cannot any longer be trifled with. Happily the true state of the case is now pretty well understood all over the country, in England as well as in Scotland; and the mind and conscience of the nation will not much longer consent to have things remain as they are. The principles which should guide and control legislation on the land question, are at present in the Highlands, even more than in England,

the subject of much interest and discussion. Those views, no doubt extreme and visionary, advocated with such earnestness and power by Mr. Henry George, if they do not carry conviction, in any case stimulate inquiry, and are rapidly helping to form an intelligent opinion. When the opportunity is afforded, that opinion will certainly express itself in a constitutional form. Meantime for my present argument it is enough to say, that a large public fund, available for the necessities of the people, will form an element of invaluable service when Parliament comes to deal practically with this question. Farms will have to be stocked and houses built. Loans, and possibly grants of money will therefore have to be provided; and it need not be said that the security afforded by a fund representing so large an amount as £46,000 a year will go far to remove practical difficulties in this respect.

Third, HARBOURS OF REFUGE, and requisite appliances for prosecuting and developing the fisheries on the Highland coasts. When the crofter population now settled upon the shores of the Highlands were evicted from their holdings in the interior, and driven to seek a livelihood as they best could on the coast, they were, as a rule, wholly unacquainted with a seafaring life. The art of deep-sea fishing, even if they had possessed the requisite implements, was unknown to them. And to acquire this art on a coast so boisterous as theirs, and with such slender appliances as they were able gradually to command, meant no small amount of courageous perseverance and self-denial. Now, however, after one or two generations have gone, boatmen more daring and expert are nowhere to be found. Still, although their storm-beaten shores abound with fish, no proper development of this industry on the open coast has been possible, from the absence of Harbours of Refuge for shelter, and the difficulty of access to remunerative markets. With large and powerful boats, and sufficient tackle, the fishing industry on these coasts might, notwithstanding such drawbacks, have attained to some importance; but how could

a half-starved, oppressed, and helpless people procure such appliances? If those friends who talk so glibly of the laziness of the Highland people were themselves placed in similar circumstances, they would beyond any question discover that a half-starved and helpless man need not be expected to attack and overcome insuperable difficulties. To pursue with success the deep-sea fisheries, Harbours of Refuge on the northern and north-eastern coasts are indispensable. Proper appliances for prosecuting the industry are also wanted, particularly on the western coast, and likewise facilities for ready access to the larger markets. There is reason to believe that the government have in contemplation legislative action in this respect, and every legitimate means should of course be used to press its importance upon their attention.

I do not say that the great public fund, to which I have been referring, would be most suitably applied in furtherance of this object; it is enough to know that the fund exists as the property of the people, and this fact should, and no doubt will, encourage Parliament when called upon to deal with the case of the Highland crofters, to do so comprehensively and thoroughly. Let us hope that the day is not far distant when a beneficent course of legislation in the directions I have indicated will have wiped out for ever a blot and scandal upon our civilization which has been too long permitted to remain, and that this most interesting Highland country, no longer disfigured by the action of unjust laws and a dominant landocracy, will add to its many natural attractions the presence of a contented, prosperous, and Christian people.

I have been blamed by friends of the Highland Association, whom I can only respect, for bringing up this burning Church question in connection with the Crofters' land question. In the foregoing pages I have endeavoured to show that in the circumstances of the Highlands the two questions are inextricably united. It is vain to think of dealing practically with the one injustice and leaving the other un-

touched. I regret that offence should be given. But no one individual interest can suffer by the course proposed. Good only, to all concerned, must result, and a scandal most damaging to the Established Church herself, and disgraceful to the nation, would be removed and buried out of sight.

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## APPENDIX A.

In the *Annals of the Disruption*, Part III., pages 1 to 41, cases of oppression are stated, all confirmed by evidence given before the House of Commons Committee on Sites, 1847. I give two extracts only. *Annals*, page 8. *Report on Sites*, ii. p. 111, q. 3674 seq.; iii. p. 9, q. 4442 seq.; iii. pp. 23, 24, qq. 4440-4459; ii. p. 111, q. 3684.

“At the hamlet of Paible, in North Uist, the circumstances are given in greater detail. The people had set about erecting a rude shelter of turf and stone (within which to meet for worship) on what was called a common, where the ground was of little value. The factor, after warning them in vain, came personally on the scene, got together the carts belonging to members of the Established Church, and removed the materials to a distance. When the next term came, he summoned out of their lands all the crofters who had taken part in the erection, actually ejected nine of the more prominent, and imposed fines of from £1 to £2 on those who were suffered to remain.

“The poor Islemen, however, did not flinch. In March, 1847, when Dr. Macintosh Mackay came to preach at Paible, he had, owing to the state of the weather, to stand within the door of a cart-shed in order to get some protection. The congregation ‘stood all round on a level piece of ground sheltered by the walls of the houses on one side. It was a stormy day, and there were heavy showers of sleet and rain.’ Afterwards they met under the shelter of a peculiar jutting rock near the hamlet. ‘I could compare it to nothing but what is sometimes seen on the quarter-deck of a vessel—an oval skylight.’ In all states of the weather it was possible to get some shelter by going round to the point opposite to that from which the wind blew.”

*Annals*, Part IV., page 51. Dr. Begg visited *Applecross* in 1845, and reports—“Here was another scene. The tent (pulpit) was placed amid the naked rocks on the sea-shore, the sound of the Psalms literally mingled with the roar of the waves of the Atlantic. The tent was fastened down with strong ropes to prevent its being upset, and there were gray-headed men sitting uncovered in the cold,

and several of them with tears streaming down their cheeks, whilst Mr. Glass preached to them the blessed Gospel in their native tongue. Every new spectacle I witnessed deepened my impression of astonishment. These poor Highlanders must face all the storms of winter on the bare sea-beach, denied a single inch of land on which to erect a place of worship. *Such a state of matters in Ireland would shake the empire*, and it is Christian principle alone which has borne it so meekly." &c. &c. &c. &c. &c.

## APPENDIX B.

As it is more than probable that many who are interested in the Scottish Highlands are not familiar with the history of the wrongs of the Highland people, I append, in corroboration of statements in the foregoing pages which may seem extreme, extracts from authentic writings on the subject. Mr. Alexander Mackenzie of Inverness, in a volume entitled *The Highland Clearances*, has compiled a valuable collection of these writings, which I commend to the notice of those who desire information in a concrete and methodical form on the Highland question. It should be borne in mind that the Highland peasantry were not evicted because they failed to pay rents, but that the landlord might obtain higher rents by turning the lands into sheep-farms of immense extent, and into deer-forests.

### EXTRACTS.

SUTHERLAND.—*Donald Macleod's "Gloomy Memories,"* p. 27, 28.  
—"At this period (1814-16) a great majority of the inhabitants were tenants-at-will, and therefore liable to ejectment on getting regular notice; there were, however, a few who had still existing tacks (although some had been wheedled or frightened into surrendering them), and these were, of course, unmolested until the expiration of their tacks; they were then turned out like the rest; but the great body of the tenantry were in the former condition. Meantime, the factors, taking advantage of the broken spirit and prostrate state of the people—trembling at their words or even looks—betook themselves to a new scheme to facilitate their intended proceedings, and this was to induce every householder to sign a bond or paper containing a promise of removal; and alternate threats and promises were used to induce them to do so. The promises were never realized, but, notwithstanding the people's compliance, the threats were put in execution. In about a month after the factors had obtained this promise of removal, and thirteen

days before the May term, the work of devastation was begun. They commenced by setting fire to the houses of the small tenants in extensive districts—part of the parishes of Farr, Rogart, Golspie, and the whole parish of Kildonan. I was an eye-witness of the scene. This calamity came on the people quite unexpectedly. Strong parties for each district, furnished with faggots and other combustibles, rushed on the dwellings of this devoted people, and immediately commenced setting fire to them, proceeding in their work with the greatest rapidity till about three hundred houses were in flames! The consternation and confusion were extreme; little or no time was given for removal of persons or property—the people striving to remove the sick and the helpless before the fire should reach them—next, struggling to save the most valuable of their effects. The cries of the women and children—the roaring of the affrighted cattle, hunted at the same time by the yelling dogs of the shepherds amid the smoke and fire—altogether presented a scene that completely baffles description; it required to be seen to be believed. A dense cloud of smoke enveloped the whole country by day, and even extended far on the sea; at night an awfully grand but terrific scene presented itself—all the houses in an extensive district in flames at once! I myself ascended a height about eleven o'clock in the evening, and counted two hundred and fifty blazing houses, many of the owners of which were my relations, and all of whom I personally knew; but whose present condition, whether in or out of the flames, I could not tell. The conflagration lasted six days, till the whole of the dwellings were reduced to ashes or smoking ruins.”

P. 33, 34.—“In reference to the new allotments, General Stewart says:—“When the valleys and higher grounds were let to the shepherds the whole population was driven to the sea-shore, where they were crowded on small lots of land to earn their subsistence by labour and by sea-fishing, the latter so little congenial to their former habits.” He goes on to remark, in a note, that these *one or two acre lots* are represented as an *improved* system. “In a country without regular employment and without manufactures a family is to be supported on one or two acres!!” The consequence was and continues to be, that, “over the whole of this district, where the sea-shore is accessible, the coast is thickly studded with wretched cottages, crowded with starving inhabitants.” Strangers “with capital” usurp the land and dispossess the swain. “Ancient respectable tenants, who passed the greater part of life in the enjoyment of abundance, and in the exercises of hospitality and charity, possessing stocks of ten, twenty, and thirty breeding cows, with the usual proportion of other stock, are now pining on one or two acres of bad land, with one or two starved cows; and for this accommodation a calculation is made, that they must support their families and pay the rent of their lots, not from the produce but from the sea. When the herring fishery succeeds they generally satisfy the landlords,

whatever privations they may suffer; but when the fishing fails they fall in arrears and are sequestered, and their stock sold to pay their rents, their lots given to others, and they and their families turned adrift on the world."

P. 36, 37.—"I have already mentioned that the clergy of the Established Church (none other were tolerated in Sutherland), all but Mr. Sage were consenting parties to the expulsion of the inhabitants, and had substantial reasons for their readiness to accept woolly and hairy animals—sheep and dogs—in place of their human flocks. The kirks and manses were mostly situated in the low grounds, and the clergy hitherto held their pasturage in common with the tenantry; and this state of things, established by law and usage, no factor or proprietor had power to alter without mutual consent. Had the ministers maintained those rights they would have placed in many cases an effectual bar to the oppressive proceedings of the factors; for the strange sheep-farmers would not bid for or take the lands where the minister's sheep and cattle would be allowed to commingle with theirs. But no! Anxious to please the 'powers that be,' and no less anxious to drive advantageous bargains with them, these reverend gentlemen found means to get their lines laid 'in pleasant places,' and to secure good and convenient portions of the pasture lands enclosed for themselves: many of the small tenants were removed purely to satisfy them in these arrangements. Their subserviency to the factors in all things was not for nought. Besides getting their hill pasturage enclosed their tillage lands were extended, new manses and offices were built for them, and roads made specially for their accommodation, and every arrangement made for their advantage. They basked in the sunshine of favour, they were the bosom friends of the factors and new tenants (many of whom were soon made magistrates), and had the honour of occasional visits at their manses from the proprietors themselves. They were always employed to explain and interpret to the assembled people the orders and designs of the factors; and they did not spare their college paint on these occasions."

*Hugh Miller*, p. 179, in his powerful writings on the Sutherland clearances, quotes the following passage from the French writer Sismondi:—"It is by a cruel abuse of legal forms—it is by an unjust usurpation—that the *tacksman* and the tenant in Sutherland are considered as having no right to the land which they have occupied for so many ages. . . . A count or earl has no more right to expel from their homes the inhabitants of his county, than a king to expel from his country the inhabitants of his kingdom."

ROSS-SHIRE.—*Eviction of the Rosses*, p. 222, 223.—"Commenting on this incredible atrocity committed in the middle of the nineteenth century! Donald Macleod says truly that:—It was so horrifying and so brutal that he did not wonder at the rev. gentleman's delicacy in



speaking of it, and directing his hearers to peruse Mr. Ross's pamphlet for full information. Mr. Ross went from Glasgow to Greenyard all the way to investigate the case upon the spot, and found that Mr. Taylor, a native of Sutherland, well educated in the evicting schemes and murderous cruelty of that county, and Sheriff-substitute of Ross-shire, marched from Tain upon the morning of the 31st March, at the head of a strong party of armed constables, with heavy bludgeons and firearms, conveyed in carts and other vehicles, allowing them as much ardent drink as they chose to take before leaving and on their march, so as to qualify them for the bloody work which they had to perform; fit for any outrage, fully equipped, and told by the sheriff to show no mercy to anyone who would oppose them, and not allow themselves to be called cowards, by allowing these mountaineers victory over them. In this excited half-drunken state they came in contact with the unfortunate women of Greenyard, who were determined to prevent the officers from serving the summonses of removal upon them, and keep their holding of small farms where they and their forefathers lived and died for generations. But no time was allowed for parley; the sheriff gave the order to clear the way, and, be it said to his everlasting disgrace, he struck the first blow at a woman, the mother of a large family, and large in the family way at the time, who tried to keep him back; then a general slaughter commenced; the women made noble resistance until the bravest of them got their arms broken, then they gave way. This did not allay the rage of the murderous brutes; they continued clubbing at the protectless creatures until every one of them was stretched on the field, weltering in their blood, or with broken arms, ribs and bruised limbs. In this woeful condition many of them were hand-cuffed together, others tied with coarse ropes, huddled into carts, and carried prisoners to Tain. I have seen myself, in the possession of Mr. Ross, Glasgow, patches or scalps of the skin, with the long hair adhering to them, which was found upon the field a few days after this inhuman affray. Mr. Donald Ross placed the whole affair before the Lord Advocate for Scotland, but no notice was taken of it by that functionary further than that the majesty of the law would need to be observed and attended to."

INVERNESS.—*Glengarry Clearances*, p. 267, 268.—"The tenants of Knoydart, like all other Highlanders, had suffered severely during and after the potato famine in 1846 and 1847, and some of them got into arrear with a year, and some with two years' rent; but they were fast clearing it off. Mrs. Macdonell and her factor determined to evict every crofter on her property, to make room for sheep. In the spring of 1853 they were all served with summonses of removal, accompanied by a message that Sir John Macneil, chairman of the Board of Supervision, had agreed to convey them to Australia. . . . It was afterwards found not convenient to transport them to Australia, and it was then intimated

to the poor creatures, as if they were nothing but common slaves to be disposed of at will, that they would be taken to North America, and that a ship would be at Isle Ornsay, in the Isle of Skye, in a few days, to receive them, and that they *must* go on board. The *Sillery* soon arrived. Mrs. Macdonell and her factor came all the way from Edinburgh to see the people hounded across in boats, and put on board this ship whether they would or not. An eye-witness who described the proceeding at the time, in a now rare pamphlet, and whom we met a few years ago in Nova Scotia, characterizes the scene as heart-rending. "The wail of the poor women and children, as they were torn away from their homes, would have melted a heart of stone." Some few families, principally cottars, refused to go, in spite of every influence brought to bear upon them; and the treatment they afterwards received was cruel beyond belief. The houses, not only of those who went, but of those who remained, were burned and levelled to the ground. The Strath was dotted all over with black spots, showing where yesterday stood the habitations of men. The scarred, half-burned wood—couples, rafters, and cabars—were strewn about in every direction. Stooks of corn and plots of unlifted potatoes could be seen on all sides, but man was gone. No voice could be heard. Those who refused to go aboard the *Sillery* were in hiding among the rocks and caves, while their friends were packed off like so many African slaves to the Cuban market."

ARGYLE.—*Morvern*, p. 358, 359.—The Rev. Donald Macleod, editor of *Good Words*, describing the death of the late Dr. John Macleod, for fifty years the parish minister of Morvern, says—"His later years were spent in pathetic loneliness. He had seen his parish almost emptied of its people. Glen after glen had been turned into sheep-walks, and the cottages in which generations of gallant Highlanders had lived and died were unroofed, their torn walls and gables left standing like mourners beside the grave, and the little plots of garden, or of cultivated enclosure allowed to merge into the moorland pasture. He had seen every property in the parish change hands, and though, on the whole, kindly and pleasant proprietors came, in the place of the old families, yet they were strangers to the people, neither understanding their language nor their ways. The consequence was that they perhaps scarcely realized the havoc produced by the changes they inaugurated. 'At one stroke of the pen,' he said to me, with a look of sadness and indignation, 'two hundred of the people were ordered off. There was not one of these whom I did not know, and their fathers before them; and finer men and women never left the Highlands.' He thus found himself the sole remaining link between the past and present—the one man above the rank of a peasant who remembered the old days and the traditions of the people. The sense of change was intensely saddened, as he went through his parish and passed ruined houses here, there, and everywhere. 'There

is not a smoke there now,' he used to say with pathos, of the glens which he had known tenanted by a manly and loyal peasantry, among whom lived song and story, and the elevating influences of brave traditions. All were gone, and the place that once knew them, knows them no more.' The hill-side, which had once borne a happy people, and echoed the voices of joyous children, is now a silent sheep-walk. The supposed necessities of Political Economy have effected the exchange; but the day may come when the country may feel the loss of the loyal and brave race which has been driven away, and find a new meaning perhaps in the old question, 'Is not a man better than a sheep?' They who 'would have shed their blood like water' for queen and country, are in other lands, Highland still, but expatriated for ever.

From the dim shieling on the misty island,  
Mountains divide us and a world of seas,  
But still our hearts are true, our hearts are Highland,  
And in our dreams we behold the Hebrides;  
Tall are these mountains, and these woods are grand,  
But we are exiled from our fathers' land."

## APPENDIX C.

A well-known authority on Educational matters in Scotland, writes as follows in an important article entitled "Lord Ernest and the Church," which will be found in the *North British Mail* of February 8th last. The figures given include the *sum-total* of Educational expenditure in the respective districts.

"But it is in the Highlands and Islands, where the Established Church is a perfect nullity, that the school rates press most heavily upon the mass of the people. In the eleven parishes of the county of Caithness, for example, the educational expenditure amounted last year to £16,561, and the average rate of assessment is upwards of a shilling a pound. In Latheron it is 1s. 6d. and in Keiss 1s. 9d. a pound. In Inverness-shire the sum-total of educational expenditure was £38,350, and in a number of parishes the school rate ranges from two shillings to half-a-crown per pound. Matters are worse in Ross and Cromarty, where the total cost of the schools last year was £39,928, and the assessment was as high as 4s. 6d. in two parishes and 6s. 8d. in a third. In Orkney the expenditure was £12,971, and the average rate about a shilling in the pound. In Shetland the total cost was £16,062, and the average assessment is one and sixpence. In three parishes it is two shillings; in two, two shillings and eightpence; and in one, three shillings a pound. In all these cases the rate is, of course, exclusive of school fees. But in order to show the urgent need of a change in this system,

it is necessary to place side by side with the cost of the schools the position and the expense of the Established Church in those counties. In the greater part of the thirty-seven parishes in Orkney and Shetland the churches of the Establishment are almost entirely empty. The public money spent in maintaining a sinecure clergyman in each parish is more than wasted, and, if properly directed, the sum would go a great way to provide free education for all the children. In looking over the list of Parliamentary returns, in Ross-shire we find one parish minister whose Sunday audience consists of his sister and domestics; another who, having no wife or sister to manage his household affairs, has an audience limited to his servants; a third who has never had a single hearer, though personally liked by the parishioners; a fourth in a similar position, who is neither esteemed nor liked. Would it not be better both for the interests of religion and the general welfare of the country if the salaries of these ministers were devoted to the support of the teachers who are instructing the rising generation in the knowledge of their duties and training them to be useful members of society? In Applecross, where the Sunday congregation in the Established Church usually consists of five persons, the school rate is one shilling a pound, and the annual cost of the schools is £670. In Lochcarron, where the audience on special occasions reaches a dozen, the rate is 1s. 5d., and the expenditure £1826 a year. In Gairloch, one of the largest parishes in Scotland, the minister claims thirteen adherents, the rate is a shilling, and the total cost £1310 a year. . . . In Portree, the chief town of Skye, where the Established Church musters forty-nine adherents, the school rate is 2s. a pound, and the total cost £1423. Snizort, with twenty-three adherents, is assessed at 1s. 8d. per pound, and pays £1682 for education. Kilmuir, which made no return of members, is rated at 2s. per pound; and Harris, at 2s. 7d. a pound, has to meet an expenditure of £6828 a year for education. But "in the lowest depth a lower deep still opens." The Island of Lewis exhibits the *ne plus ultra* of this system. The Established Church can scarcely be said to have even a nominal existence there. In the Parliamentary return the communicants in the parish of Lochs are set down at six—the school rate is 4s. 6d., and the annual expense of the schools is £4578. In Barvas there are said to be seven adherents of the Establishment—the school rate is 6s. 8d. per pound, and the total educational expenditure is £5732 a year. The instances we have given are fair specimens of the state of matters, ecclesiastical and educational, in the Highlands and Islands. . . . No candid and impartial person will deny that the large sums of money thus uselessly spent in maintaining ministers who have no congregations and pastors who have no flocks would be laid out to much greater advantage in maintaining a system of education of which the whole nation, without distinction of class or sect or creed, could avail themselves, and which would bring the blessings of free education within reach of the whole community."















































































































